

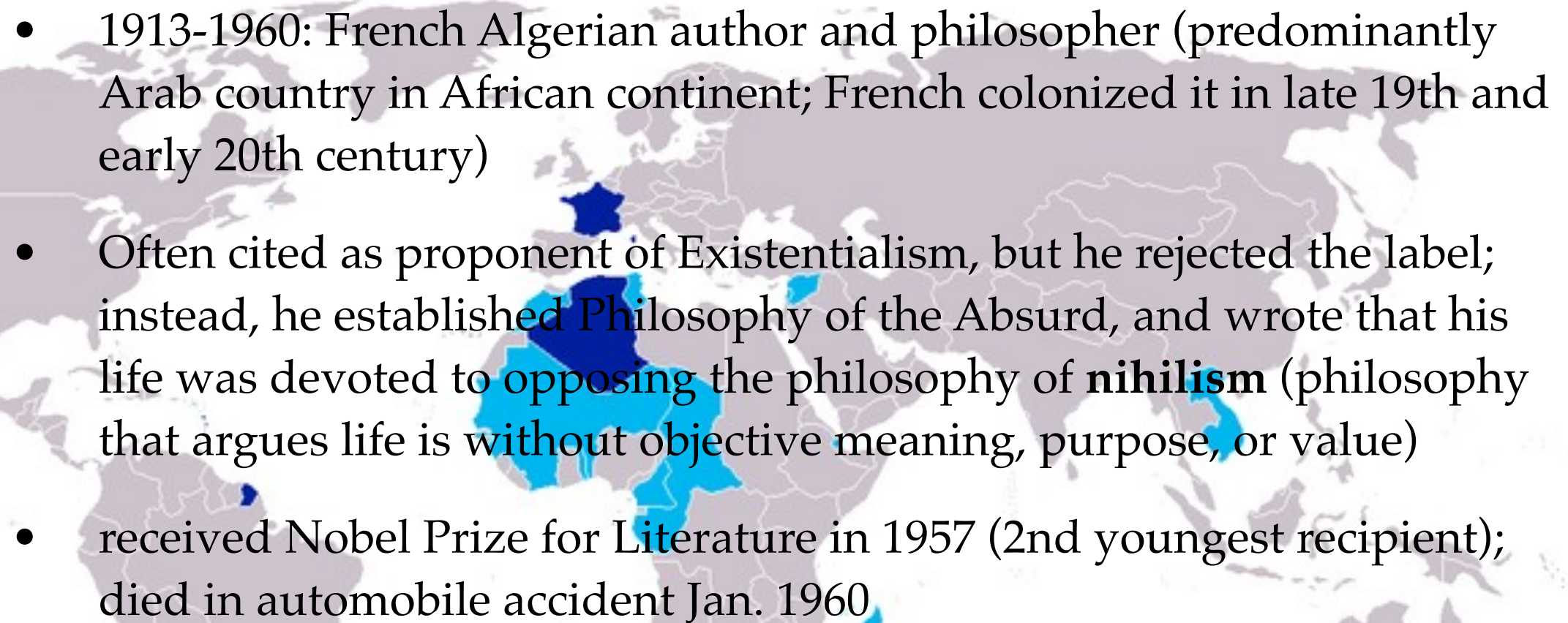


ALBERT CAMUS

PHILOSOPHY OF THE ABSURD

BY MR. NEFF

AUTHOR BACKGROUND

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- 1913-1960: French Algerian author and philosopher (predominantly Arab country in African continent; French colonized it in late 19th and early 20th century)
 - Often cited as proponent of Existentialism, but he rejected the label; instead, he established Philosophy of the Absurd, and wrote that his life was devoted to opposing the philosophy of nihilism (philosophy that argues life is without objective meaning, purpose, or value)
 - received Nobel Prize for Literature in 1957 (2nd youngest recipient); died in automobile accident Jan. 1960

CAMUS'S DEATH

- January 4, 2010, 2:32 *pm*

Camus's Death and a Rare French Sports Car

By [PHIL PATTON](#)

Monday marks the 50th anniversary of the death of [Albert Camus](#), the existentialist philosopher and novelist — and of the brief moment of notoriety Camus's death brought to the car in which he died, a [Facel Vega](#).

Albert Camus died 50 years ago today in a car accident in France.

Camus was 46 when he died in a crash while returning to Paris from Provence after the holidays on Jan. 4, 1960, in a car driven by his friend and publisher Michel Gallimard.

In the small town of Villeblevin, Gallimard lost control of the car, and Camus was killed. Gallimard was injured and died a few days later. Camus had with him a ticket for the train he had originally planned to ride and the manuscript of his last book.

Camus, known for his ideas of the absurd, is supposed to have said that the most absurd way to die would be in a car crash...

- from NY Times

CAMUS AND THE ABSURD

- “It happens that the stage sets collapse. Rising, streetcar, four hours in the office or the factory, meal, streetcar, four hours of work, meal, sleep, and Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday and Saturday according to the same rhythm—this path is easily followed most of the time. But one day the “why” arises and everything begins in that weariness tinged with amazement.”
 - from “An Absurd Reasoning” in *The Myth of Sisyphus*

CAMUS'S PHILOSOPHY OF THE ABSURD

- the human condition is absurd: there is a conflict between:
 - man's desire for meaning in life <--->
and the reality of a silent, cold universe.
- As such, man has three options: suicide; a "leap of faith"; or recognition (the last being the only defensible option in Camus's p.o.v.)

ABSURD CONT'D

- Three options in facing the absurd:
 - **suicide**: terminating the physical self is a “confession” that life is not worth living; unacceptable to Camus
 - **“leap of faith”**: the belief that there is more than rational, physical life (religious belief). Camus argues that the leap of faith relies on abstraction rather than personal experience, and thus is “philosophical suicide”.
 - **recognition**: (Camus’s choice) If one recognizes the absurd, then -->one recognizes that the universe is without absolutes, then -->one recognizes that we are free as individuals to create our own meaning

ABSURD (CONT'D)

- human freedom is established in one's ability to think for him / herself and thus create one's own meaning
- however, there is no objective (factual, predetermined) meaning because the universe is silent.
- Thus, one can find happiness in acknowledging the absurdity of seeking meaning, but continuing and finding meaning from the search itself (subjective meaning)

ABSURD CONT'D

- Camus “draw[s] from the absurd three consequences”
- “my revolt”: the refusal of suicide and search for meaning despite the revelation of the Absurd
- “my freedom”: lack of imprisonment by religious or others’ moral codes
- “my passion”: the most wholehearted, full experiencing of life

ABSURD PERSPECTIVE ON...

- **The meaning of life**
 - humans attempt to find meaning and conclude that either: a) life is meaningless--we only have the here and now; b) we fill the void with belief in a higher power or abstract concept
- **Elusion**
 - In doing “B”, we avoid rather than acknowledge the Absurd. If we avoid it, we can never confront it.
- **God**
 - Camus: to believe in God is to “deny one of the terms of the contradiction” between humanity and the universe and is thus “philosophical suicide”. Camus argues that absurdity does not lead to belief in God, but he notes, “I did not say ‘excludes God’, which would still amount to asserting.” (agnostic rather than atheistic)

ABSURD PERSPECTIVE ON...

- **Suicide**
 - For Camus, suicide is not an option, because if life is absurd, it is even more absurd to counteract (avoid) it; we should accept that we live in a universe without purpose, and engage in living.
- **Personal Meaning**
 - The beauty which people encounter in life makes it worth living. People may create their own meaning; it's not objective meaning, but it provides something for which to strive. However, one must always recognize that this is an invented meaning.
- **Freedom**
 - In a world devoid of higher meaning or judicial afterlife, the human being becomes as close to free as humanly possible: freedom within the bounds of the absurd condition.

ABSURD ON...

- **Hope**
 - Absurdism rejects hope because it refuses to believe in any more than what this life provides. The absurd hero's refusal of hope is the single greatest reason to live in the present with passion. Hope is an evasion of the absurd. One should live without hope and thus experience the present fully and with passion.
- **Integrity**
 - The absurdist is not guided by morality, but rather, his/her own integrity. The absurdist is amoral ("without moral quality"; "not involving questions of right or wrong"; this is NOT immoral, meaning "violating moral principles").
 - Integrity = honesty with the self and consistency in the motivations of one's actions and decisions.

CAMUS QUOTES

- In the depth of winter I finally learned that there was in me an invincible summer.
- I would rather live my life as if there is a God and die to find out there isn't, than live my life as if there isn't and die to find out there is.
- You will never be happy if you continue to search for what happiness consists of. You will never live if you are looking for the meaning of life.
- *Nous nous trompons toujours deux fois sur ceux que nous aimons: d'abord à leur avantage, puis à leur désavantage.*
- We always deceive ourselves twice about the people we love — first to their advantage, then to their disadvantage.

CAMUS QUOTES

- Since we're all going to die, it's obvious that when and how don't matter.
- Accepting the absurdity of everything around us is one step, a necessary experience: it should not become a dead end. It arouses a revolt that can become fruitful.
- The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy.
- I shall tell you a great secret, my friend. Do not wait for the Last Judgment. It takes place every day. (*The Fall*)
- **I love life — that's my real weakness. I love it so much that I am incapable of imagining what is not life. (*The Fall*)**

THE STRANGER (1942)

L'ÉTRANGE

- Here's one way of looking at it: